



News Release

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CHIP Enrollment Closes September 1

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Rising healthcare costs and a limited budget have prompted the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) to close enrollment for CHIP (Children’s Health Insurance Program). The last day to apply for CHIP is Friday, Sept. 1, 2006 at 5 p.m. Health officials urge families to take advantage of the low cost healthcare coverage. All eligible children who apply before the deadline will be accepted.

As healthcare costs rise across the nation, Utah’s CHIP is experiencing the same cost pressures. “We originally expected to be able to enroll more children, but recent cost estimates dictate that we cap enrollment to stay within budget,” said Nathan Checketts, director, Bureau of Access, UDOH.

Increased legislative appropriations allowed CHIP enrollment to remain open continuously for the past 13 months. Since July 1, 2005, CHIP has covered approximately 24,000 new children who were previously uninsured.

Current CHIP enrollment is 35,724 children, although several thousand more may enroll before the closing date. Once enrollment is closed, enrollment numbers will vary as children leave the program, with many of them leaving for private health insurance. The decision to re-open enrollment will depend on 2007 projected costs for the average number of children insured by CHIP. In previous years, CHIP has remained closed for about seven to ten months between open enrollment periods.

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Although CHIP will not be accepting applications after Sept. 1, UDOH is seeking federal approval for a new option that would reimburse parents when they enroll their eligible children in their employer-sponsored insurance. “We are optimistic that we will have this option approved this fall. It will be a great opportunity for families to maximize their options for healthcare,” Checketts said.

CHIP provides medical, dental and mental health services to Utah children 18 and under. Benefits include immunizations, regular check-ups at the doctor’s office, prescriptions and dental services such as cavity fillings. The cost to enroll is \$25 or less every three months and requires minimal co-pays for services. Utah’s CHIP has been in operation since 1998.

To apply for CHIP by Sept. 1, 2006 at 5 pm., parents may call 1-877-KIDS-NOW (1-877-543-7669) to get an application, complete an online application at www.health.utah.gov, or apply in person at a local eligibility office.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.